

History  
= Kingston Nook

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## **The Kingston Nook — No Man's Land**

BY MONTY HEALY

Before we get back to the 1627 Plymouth 2nd Division, in which every man, woman and child was granted 20 acres, mostly along the shores of Plymouth Bay; a brief summary of Duxbury history relative to the Bay Farm-Jones River area is in order. The early settlers of "Duxburrow" moved from Plymouth around 1627-1630. The boundaries of the settlement were considered to be the Jones River on the south and Tussock Brook on the southwest. Tussock Brook joins Stony Brook a short distance north of the Jones River. That section of Stony Brook was sometimes referred to as Blackwater Creek (the headwaters of Stony Brook is Blackwater Swamp). That area was considered the southwest boundary when the town was incorporated in 1637, so when the land grants in that area were set off to people like Thomas Rogers, Stephen Tracy and Joseph Wadsworth, they were all considered to be "of Duxbury." There were written descriptions of the town boundaries by 1685, if not before. The "Kingston" part of Plymouth was designated the North Precinct of Plymouth, and was often in disputes with the rest of the town relative to schools, church and taxes. As early as 1714 there were efforts made to set the town off as a separate community. Plymouth had previously made efforts to have a school in the precinct, as well as a minister, in order to quell the unrest, but that seemed not to be a satisfactory solution. By 1716 petitions were made for separation and no action was taken. There were repeated requests in the following years and finally in 1726 Kingston became a separate town. Plymouth had fought to keep the North Precinct because they did not want to lose the Jones River, fertile farmland, timber, tanning facilities and ship-building yards. Major John Bradford, who was 68 years old in 1720, was the chief benefactor of the North Precinct and the leader in the drive to sever ties with Plymouth. He had a large grant from his house on the corner of what became Landing Road (Kingston) and Maple Street down to the river. The current railroad bridge over Landing Road is on his grant and originally Landing Road was where the major's driveway is before the street was straightened out.

In 1857, 220 years after Duxbury became a separate town, an act was passed that set off the southerly part of Duxbury and annexed it to Kingston. This property had been referred to as the "Kingston Nook," probably to distinguish it from the "Captain's Nook" in the Standish Shore area. The two towns formed committees to argue both sides of the issue. Alexander Holmes, a successful ship builder, led the Kingston petitioners. The Kingston committee supported the petition. A legal meeting of the inhabitants of the Town of Duxbury was held on Feb. 23, 1857 and a committee was selected to "remonstrate against" the petition on behalf of the town. See sidebar for points presented to the General Court as part of the petitions.

The above reasons were signed by the committee, which consisted of G. (Gershom) B. Weston, Joseph F. Wadsworth and Samuel Stetson.

In order to orient yourself (2014) to the Kingston Nook area, if you take Bay Road from Halls Corner, turn left at the end (Miramar). When you go by the "dog walker's parking area" there is a stone post near the entrance with a "D" and "K" on it, that is the Duxbury-Kingston town line. A little farther along, near Cretinon's farm stand on the opposite side of the street, there is a stone tablet with a seal on it, which is a mile marker "Plymouth 5 miles, Boston 42 miles." Continuing on, after passing under Route 3 there is a bridge passing over water, which is Stony Brook (Blackwater Creek) that is where the Duxbury Town Line used to be. The Jones River is on your left just turning south parallel to Landing Road. At the southerly end of Landing Road the Jones River passes under Route 3A.

Ship building in Kingston was carried out on the Jones River, mostly in the area parallel to Landing Road. Further expansion in the Rocky Nook area was limited by the rocky and shallow shore. The Holmes family, of father Joseph and sons Alexander and Edward, were the most successful ship builders in Kingston owning 83 ships, most of which they built themselves. It is easy to see why Alexander championed the annexation of Kingston Nook. It was not long after the annexation that the Holmes family had a shipyard on the north side of the river. Alexander and his father might be considered the King Caesars of Kingston, mimicking the success of Ezra Weston and Ezra Weston, Jr. of Duxbury. Alexander was reputed to be the first person to ship ice to the West Indies, with the aid of Frederic Tudor. Tudor had the vessels double sheathed and insulated the ice with pine sawdust. Sailors were

afraid the ice would melt and swamp the ship, but Tudor's efforts were successful. Before long the ice trade extended to every large port in South America and the Far East. This trading lasted from 1835 to 1850 when the making of artificial ice was perfected.

I plan to locate the land grants in both the Kingston Nook and Bay Farm areas over the coming months. As of now, I believe the grants on the Kingston side of the Town Line were rescinded, even though the original grantees were, for the most part, gone. Then the Town of Kingston made new grants – a puzzle in need of a solution. No man's land.



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